2: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
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has died. A shallow hole in the sand is dug by hand, with a stick, or with a large shell. Usually nuts are transplanted at sunset. Natives say that if the planter carries someone, preferably a young boy, on his back while planting, the tree will bear more fruit. Trees on the leeward side of the island are sturdier than those on the windward side. The best harvests are gathered from trees between 10 and 60 years of age.

Good qualities in a coconut are considered by Lauans to be a thin husk and a thin shell to admit the sun, which sweetens milk and growing meat.

Ono has the reputation for having the best flavored coconuts, Lakemba for the greatest quantity of nuts. The soil of Kambara is a little too sandy for coconuts. The trees growing on Ndelaioloi are said to bring forth the largest number and the best fruit on the island. Mothe has many coconuts. On Fulanga and Ongea the trees are small and do not bear so well as on the other islands. Namuka has large groves, but many trees are unhealthy.

There are several coconut pests. *Mate ni niu* (coconut death) is caused by the purple moth (*Levuana iridescens*) and is greatly feared. The branches of the tree turn rust brown or black, drop, and the tree dies. In recent years the colonial government has sent an insect-eating fly (*Ptychomyia remota*) imported from the Malay States, to the infected islands and the pest is rapidly retreating. Coconut crabs, of which there are many on Wangava, break the nuts on the ground and eat them or leave them to spoil. On Komo, a rat is said to climb the tree and "eat" the young nuts. Some coconut trees are killed by a fern which grows in the branch fork.

Every part of the coconut tree is used. Coconut oil is indispensable. Copra is still used in limited quantities in exchange for western trade goods, especially tobacco, kerosene, and cloth. The meat is an important food for human beings, pigs, and chickens. It is the first food given to a baby. The milk is drunk and used in preparing fish and greens. The husk is used for sennit and kindling, the wood is used for fuel and is split into roof laths, the leaves are used for baskets, and the midribs of the leaflets for brooms. Whole leaves are made into mats for house walls, floor mats, and thatch. The root is used as medicine and the reticulum serves as a medicine bag. The spathes make the best torches. The branches are used in fishing, and the elastic thick middle rib, freed of its foliage, is used as a lash.

The harvest of nuts for copra is picked off the ground by women. Several nuts are carried on one arm pressed against the body and one nut is carried in the free hand of the other arm. They are placed in a row on the path or thrown into an enclosure fenced with vertically placed sticks. The nuts are split by kneeling women, the meat poked out with a stick, shell, or cane knife and put into baskets. It is then placed on boards, usually on the beach outside the grove, to dry.

3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
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competition with the whale oil industry, the market price of copra fell from £25 to £8 per ton between 1920 and 1935.[89]

Copra production was also severely curtailed in the early 20's by the spread of the purple moth (*Levuana iridescens*) from Viti Levu, where it had been known for at least sixty years, to Ovalau, and thence to many parts of Fiji including the Lau islands. The colonial government introduced a two-winged parasitic fly (*Ptychomyia remota*) from the Federated Malay States, which by 1929 had brought the pest under control and by 1936 had caused its almost complete extinction. Moreover, plantations were attacked by the coconut scale (*Aspidiotus destructa*), which is being successfully combated by a coccinellid beetle imported by the government from Java.

The great depression that struck the western world in 1929 did not affect Lau until 1931, but in that year the demand for copra fell away sharply. Communication with the outside world practically ceased, and most of the trade stores were abandoned. The natives suddenly found themselves deprived of the easy means of obtaining western trade goods on which they had become dependent. Their only recourse was to their old life. Neglected gardens were cleared and replanted, native crafts were revived, and inter-island trade was resumed. The southern island once more became the center of canoe building, woodwork, barkcloth, and mat making in Fiji. Involuntarily

[89] Annual copra exports from the colony since 1922 are shown in the following table:

Year	*Quantity* tons	*Total value* (£)	*Year*	*Quantity* tons	*Total value* (£)
1922	21,987		1930	23,882	369,524
1923	24,161		1931	16,917	177,786
1924	25,137	484,496	1932	15,076	170,240
1925	24,133	497,713	1933	22,597	195,788
1926	27,868	573,475	1934	23,526	125,941
1927	26,560	534,416	1935	26,081	220,478
1928	27,947	567,254	1936	34,581	406,393
1929	33,226	563,978			

(*Annual Reports*, Fiji, 1922-36.)

3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
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the natives regained most of their economic independence. However, a few trade articles such as bush knives, metal axes, trade cloth, soap, and cooking pots, have so far proved indispensable, and in 1934 enough copra was produced to exchange for these bare necessities which were still obtainable at a few centers. By this time there was no regular transportation to and from southern Lau. Most of the traveling of the natives was done by sailing canoes which had been revived. Otherwise an occasional visit by a Chinese owned trade cutter to replenish the supply of trade goods, a government ship for inspection, or a wandering scientist were the only contacts with the outside world.

The situation caused by the depressed market of 1931 was aggravated by a hurricane which hit the Fiji islands in that year. Actually the lowest point in the copra depression in Fiji was not reached until 1934, when the local price fell to £3.12.6 per ton.[40] Since 1934 the price and the production of copra has increased until 34,581 tons were produced at about £9.5.4 per ton in 1936. However, the price of copra was still barely high enough to cover the cost of production.

It is estimated that two-thirds of the 1936 copra crop in Fiji was produced by natives. This indicates that the native production of copra is increasing rapidly, but native methods of drying are primitive and tend to produce a poor quality of copra which sells at lower than market price. For some years the department of agriculture has been experimenting with small cheap types of hot air dryers in an effort to perfect a type suitable for use by native producers. A type of sawn timber kiln costing from £5 to £6 was first erected for demonstration purposes at the Agricultural Station at Navuso. This kiln produces copra which sells at a premium of 10s. per ton. Under government encouragement the natives are gradually becoming interested in it and this interest is spreading throughout the Fiji group. A satisfactory kiln made of

[40] It is estimated that 50% of the crop of 23,536 tons was produced by natives.

3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
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"bush" timber which costs little more than the labor required for construction has also been introduced, but the natives prefer the more finished sawn timber type.

The government is also stimulating the copra industry among the natives of Fiji by encouraging the planting of coconut palms, by supplying seedlings for planting in areas where seed nuts are not readily available, by carrying on experiments in the breeding of early maturing types of coconuts, and by assisting in an attempt to start the manufacture of dessicated coconut in Fiji.[41]

The upswing in the copra trade has naturally had an effect on the southern Lau islands where the advance and retreat of western influence depends to a large extent on the market demand and current price. On these isolated and land-poor islands there are practically no natural resources of commercial value except the coconut. The well-being of the natives and their attainment of a new adjustment depend in a large measure upon the extent and the rate of recovery of the copra trade. Too rapid expansion of the copra industry and with it western influence had a detrimental effect on the culture. Time and slow growth are necessary to absorb new elements into the old life patterns and to establish a new adjustment to the environment.

The most significant effect of the introduction of western economy into southern Lau, however, has been a devitalizing of the native economic life due to the clash of the fundamentally opposed economic philosophies. If this is to be overcome an adjustment between the two systems must be found which will bridge the gap between them. Since, as a result of recent changes, the whole tendency has been from the old communalism toward growing individualism, the new adjustment must lead the native slowly in this direction so that he will eventually become strong enough to protect himself in the modern economic world.

[41] *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture*, Fiji, 1936, pp. 9-10.